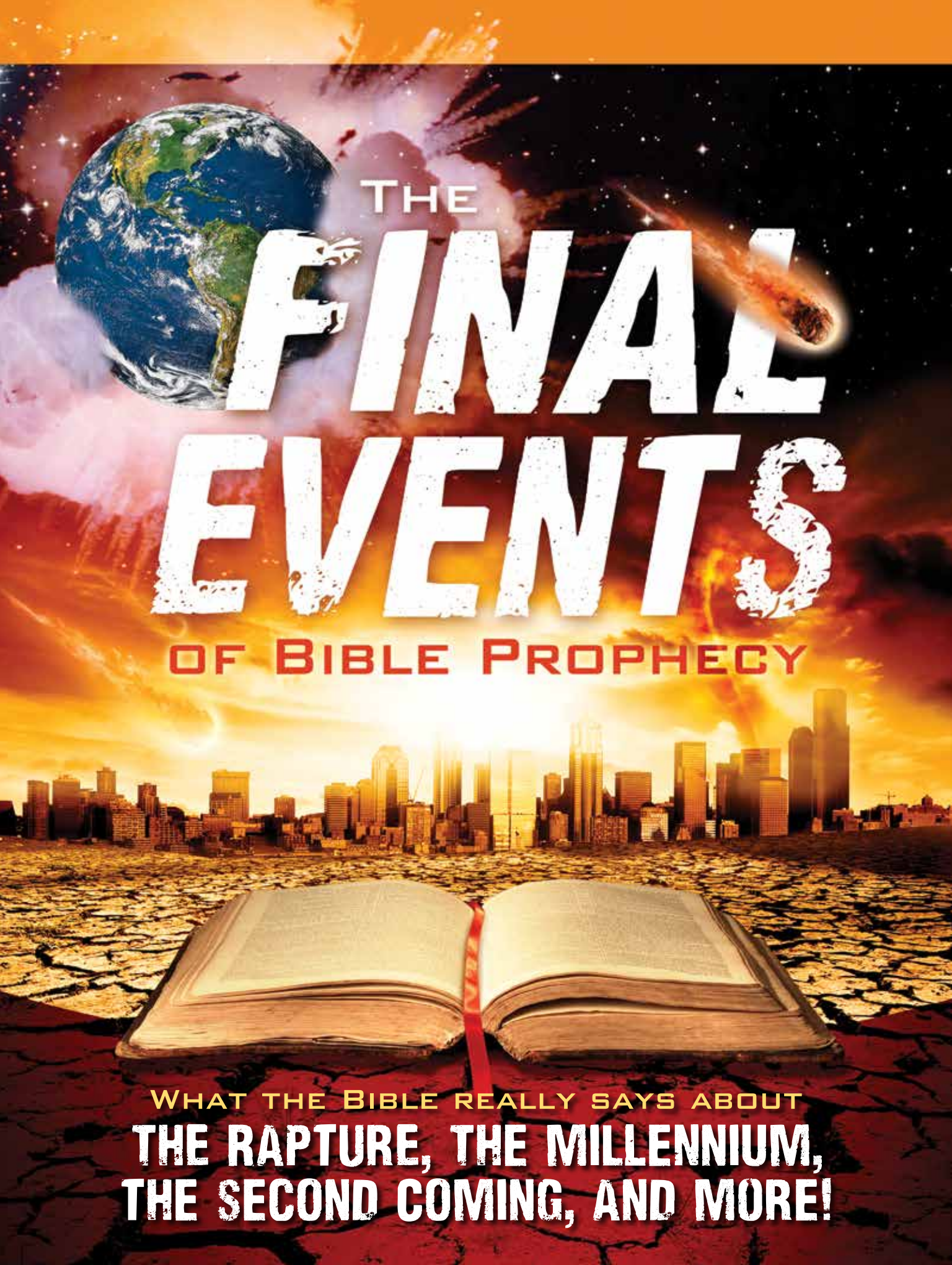

THE
FINAL
EVENTS
OF BIBLE PROPHECY
WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT
THE RAPTURE, THE MILLENNIUM,
THE SECOND COMING, AND MORE!

AMAZING FACTS

The Final Events
of Bible Prophecy

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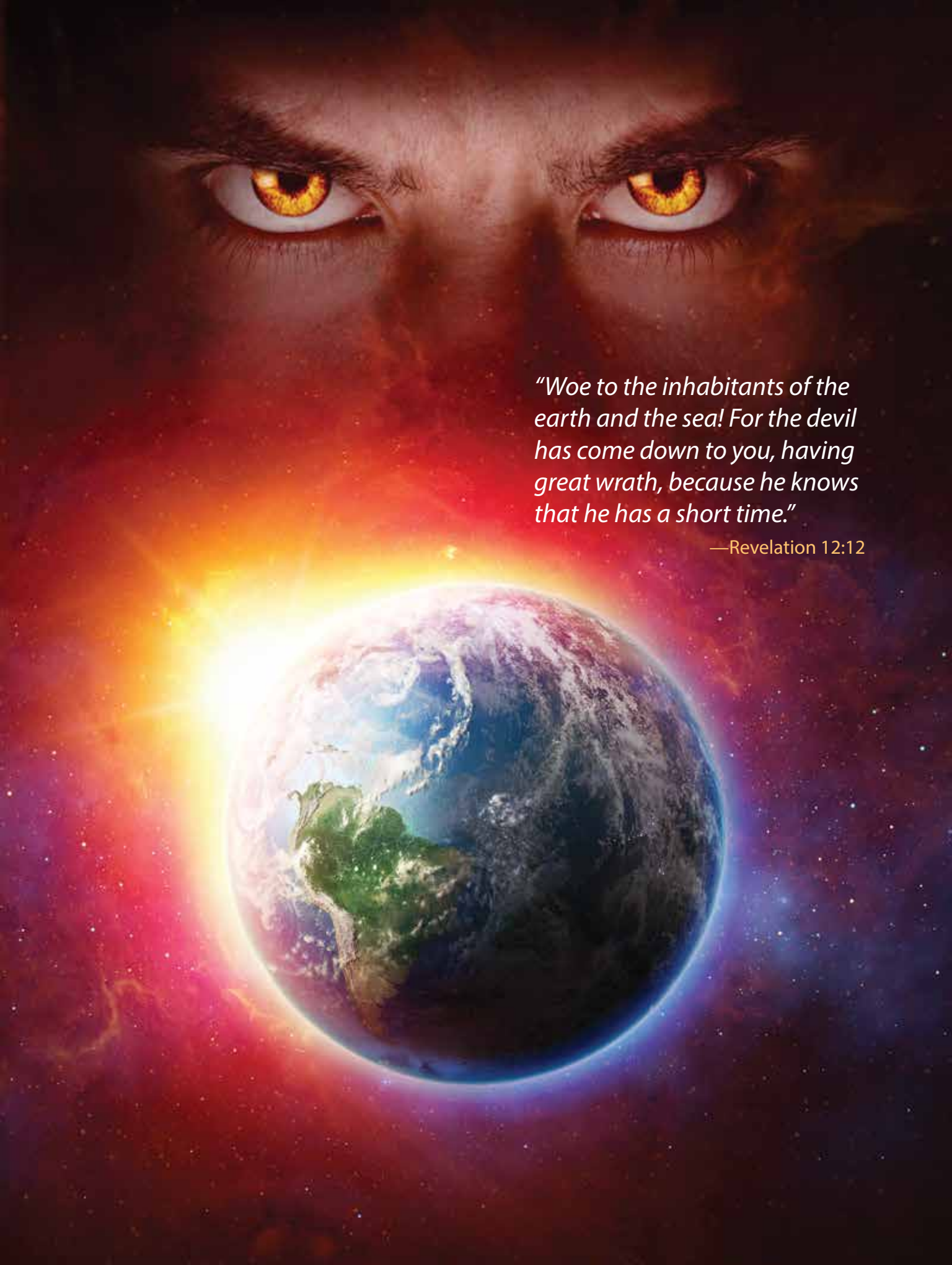


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"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."
—Revelation 12:12

MIDNIGHT
ON PLANET EARTH

Natural disasters and armed conflict have marked human existence throughout history and have always caused peaks in mortality and morbidity. But in recent times, the scale and scope of these events have increased markedly. Since 1990, natural disasters have affected about 217 million people every year, and about 300 million people now live amidst violent insecurity around the world. The immediate and longer-term effects of these disruptions on large populations constitute humanitarian crises.
—New England Journal of Medicine, *November 7, 2013*

You are running for your life. For days you have been pursued by enemies who want to kill you. Your commitment to obey God has made you a target of the state—and the church! As you stumble into a secluded mountain enclave with other believers, you fall to the ground in exhaustion. But you hardly notice your hunger, thirst, and weariness. Your supreme focus is to stay true to your faith.

The last few weeks have been a nightmare as the world has turned upside down. Record-breaking earthquakes have twisted multiple cities of the world into rubble. Monstrous, deadly tornadoes have simultaneously carved wide pathways through dozens of towns in one day. The waters of the earth have turned deadly rancid everywhere.



A pandemic of incurable and bleeding sores has struck millions. Scorching heatwaves in some countries have destroyed every plant. Reports of colossal hailstones of massive weight have crushed cars, buildings, and killed thousands. It's as if all the cruel forces of nature have been unleashed at once.

Even the heavens seem confused. Is it morning or noon? You cannot see the sun, moon, or stars … just blackness. Somehow you know in your heart that for Planet Earth, the hour has finally reached midnight.

What will the final events be like when the world ends? Do we trust blockbuster movies or bestseller books that depict an apocalyptic asteroid striking the earth—or a deadly disease wiping out all human life? Will the sun explode or burn out? Will humans successfully become an interplanetary species and escape the doom of this planet?

If popular preachers are correct, will we see the beginning of a thousand years of peace? Or will Christians be secretly raptured before a seven-year tribulation begins? Should we trust social science research, demographic trends, news reports, partisan think tanks, public opinion polls, or our next door neighbor to provide us with answers?

There is an alarming slide toward a colossal humanitarian crisis on our globe. And there is only one trustworthy way to properly understand the catastrophic times into which we are falling. The Bible gives us an accurate picture of these final happenings.

This magazine, *The Final Events of Bible Prophecy,* will show you from Scripture what is soon to take place. You will discover that in the darkest hour on earth, God will deliver His people. There is hope!



1 Final Signs

In the Holy Land along the Golan Heights, you will find warning signs in various languages—Hebrew, Arabic, French, and even English. Whatever the language, they all communicate the same message: "Attention: Land Mines!" Whole sections of territory are filled with deadly mines left over from decades of war. These signs warn people about the danger facing them if they walk into these areas.

There's no question—warning signs can play an important role in saving your life. They also have an important role in Bible prophecy, especially when it comes to what can be expected in the last days of earth's history. That's why the Bible shares so many signs of the end—to warn you about what is coming and to help you prepare for the return of Christ.



Seeing signs being fulfilled during trying times can also bring you comfort and assurance in the midst of all the danger and chaos. And who couldn't use some comfort and assurance these days?

Signs of the End

"I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He" (John 13:19).

Jesus told His followers about events that would happen in the future so that when they came to pass, they could trust His Word and that He is who He said He is.

It's the same with the signs of the end. Written thousands of years ago, the Bible gave us predictions about what would happen in these last days. If you know about these signs, when you see them come to pass just as predicted, you can know that we are in the last days. You will also have assurance that God is in control and that you can trust what He says about the future. So what are some of the signs the Bible gives us regarding the last days?



1 An Increase in Knowledge

"Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (Daniel 12:4).

The prophet Daniel predicted that prior to the end of the world, we would witness a dramatic increase in knowledge. Has it happened? There's no doubt. What we have observed in the past one hundred years in science and technology would have stunned people who lived just 250 years ago—much less 2,500 years ago, when Daniel wrote this prophecy.

For instance, for six thousand years, humans could travel no faster than by horse. Now, voyages that once required months are achieved in hours.

But another way that knowledge has increased is in a deeper understanding of the Bible and its

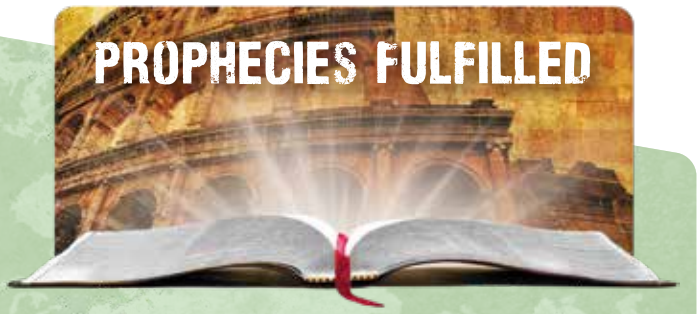
prophecies. Hundreds of events predicted in Scripture have been fulfilled already, which also means we can trust what the Bible says will come next.

2 Wars and Rumors of Wars

"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars … for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:6, 7).

In the early 1900s, many believed that the world was heading toward a time of great moral and material progress. They thought that humanity's great advances in technology would usher in a time of prosperity and peace—in which war would be a thing of the past.

That hope lasted only until World War I, during which technology and science were used to kill people in ways that our ancestors couldn't have imagined. Yet as bad as that war was, it was soon followed by World War II, during which more than 60 million people perished. And anyone who listens to the terror-filled news today knows that the danger for war is greater than it ever has been.



The Bible says, "I am the Lord. … New things I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them" (Isaiah 42:8, 9). Bible predictions of future events that have come to pass affirm the trustworthiness of Bible prophecies. Here are just a few fulfillments:

1. Four world empires would arise in this order: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. (See Daniel 2, 7, 8.)
2. Cyrus to be the warrior who captured Babylon (Isaiah 45:1–3).
3. After Babylon's destruction, it would never be inhabited again (Isaiah 13:19, 20; Jeremiah 51:37).
4. Egypt would never again have a commanding position among the nations (Ezekiel 29:14, 15; 30:12, 13).
5. Earth-shaking calamities and fear toward the end of time (Luke 21:25).
6. Moral degeneracy and decline of spirituality in the last days (2 Timothy 3:1–5).



3 Natural Disasters

"There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven" (Luke 21:11).

Who hasn't witnessed the painful reality of this prediction? One of the deadliest natural disasters in recent history occurred at the end of 2004, when an earthquake centered in the Indian Ocean caused a devastating tsunami—killing nearly 280,000 people across Southern Asia. Rarely a week goes by when we don't hear about some new natural disaster: floods, wildfires, famine, hurricanes, or earthquakes.

Luke 21:11 also mentions "pestilences"—which today we call epidemics or pandemics, caused by infectious diseases that spread quickly through human populations, between countries, and even around the world. In recent years, our planet has been afflicted with such diseases as cholera, SARS, AIDS, Ebola, Zika, and the flu.

4 Perilous Times

"Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good" (2 Timothy 3:1–3).

In the past, many of the world's brightest believed that humans were capable of perfecting themselves through education, science, and "higher reason." Yet look around at the planet today. Even the most calloused skeptic can't help but be horrified by the moral state of humanity. Within 35 days in 2017, two of the five deadliest mass shootings in U.S. history took place. Locations stained with blood are popping up everywhere—even a small church in rural Texas, where 26 people were shot down. The Bible also foresaw bias against biblical morality, political corruption, child abuse, terrorism, and more plaguing the world.

5 Interest in the Demonic

"In latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1).

In recent years, an explosion of interest in the occult and witchcraft has occurred—and a fascination with the belief that the living can talk with the dead. A flood of movies and TV shows promote this notion, yet the Bible is clear that the dead are "asleep" and cannot communicate with us. Psalm 146:4 says, "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." And Ecclesiastes 9:5 affirms, "The dead know nothing."

Many today are seeking out psychics, tarot card readers, and astrologers for guidance. Even in our sophisticated age, a huge amount of interest in the occult remains—just as the Bible predicted.



6 Gospel Goes to the World

"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

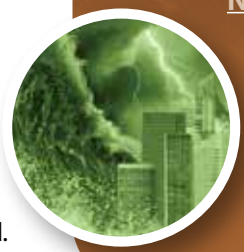
Now here's a positive sign of the end: The once seemingly insurmountable task of taking the gospel to the four corners of the earth is a reality. Through missionaries, satellite broadcasts, and now the Internet, the gospel work is accelerating around the world. The message of salvation has never had wider distribution than it does today. Christ's second coming is now being preached in more than 900 languages and dialects, and nearly 95 percent of the world's population has access to this message. Never in the history of the world has the gospel been communicated to the extent that it is now being broadcast.

What does all this mean?

These signs should cause you to follow the apostle Paul's counsel to "examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Right now, whatever your past has been, you can repent of your sins and turn to the Lord. Ask Christ for His forgiveness and He will receive you! That's how you can begin preparing for the coming of Jesus, to which all these signs so clearly point.

WORLD CRISES ON THE RISE

Many skeptics dismiss that natural disasters are, in fact, increasing in our world. But research confirms it. Since 1970, the number of disasters worldwide has more than quadrupled.[1] And there were three times as many natural disasters between 2000 to 2009 when compared to the 1980s.[2]



Natural Disasters

Summer 2010: Unprecedented Russian heatwave kills 56,000. Wildfires destroy a third of the wheat crop.

March 2011: Japan earthquake and tsunami kills 28,000 and displaces 465,000.

September 2017: Hurricane Maria kills over 500 in the Caribbean and the United States and destroys Puerto Rico.



Wars and Rumors of War

2011–2017: More than 500,000 killed and 12 million uprooted in Syria and Iraq.

2015–2017: Turkish and PKK conflict kills 2,500 combatants and civilians and displaces more than 350,000 civilians.

2016: Conflicts in Greater Sahel and Lake Chad Basin create mass human suffering, uprooting 4.3 million.

2016: Chicago experiences one of its most violent years—4,300 shootings and 762 murders.



Crime and Decline in Morality

2016: Mexico records 20,792 homicides, many drug-related, a 22 percent increase over 2015.

June 2016: Gunman opens fire inside a nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing 49 and injuring 50.

October 2017: Gunman fires from Las Vegas resort into a crowd, killing 58 and injuring more than 500. It is the deadliest shooting in modern U.S. history.



Economic Chaos

December 2007: Nearly 10 million lose their homes during the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis.

February 2018: The Dow Jones Industrial Average falls 1,175 points, the largest point drop in a single day in history.

1 https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/08/daily-chart-19
2 https://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-blogs/climatechange/steady-increase-in-climate-rel/19974069



2 A World Polarized

It was the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. Hurricane Harvey inflicted more than $125 billion in damage, dumping more than 40 inches of rain over eastern Texas in just four days, causing catastrophic flooding. At one point, a third of Houston was under water.

As we've seen, our world is experiencing record-breaking catastrophes. And despite all the advances of humanity, the earth is a dangerous place no matter where you live.



Such extreme conditions, which the Bible predicts will only get worse, create extreme responses. As the world moves toward its climactic end, people and governments will be desperate for answers and will try any means necessary to resolve these problems. But each step will polarize our world into two groups of people.

World Conditions Will Get Even Worse

"There will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:21, 22).

Natural disasters, such as Hurricane Harvey, are only one part of the "great tribulation" the world faces just before the Second Coming. Our planet will be reeling from the impact of unrelenting troubles of every kind. Nations all over the globe will be at war, and so much of society already seems to have lost its moral compass—its values and appreciation for all that is good and honorable.

As the world continues to drift toward more ominous events each day, millions will be anxiously waiting for someone to rescue them from these dire times, when "men's hearts [fail] them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken" (Luke 21:26).

A Clash of Powers

"I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast" (Revelation 13:11, 12).

Here the Bible describes a political power that will rise up in the last days "out of the earth," which is a symbol of a sparsely populated land. The horns represent that this power would be established on the pillars of religious liberty and civil liberty, but soon after it would begin to speak "like a dragon." This government would then unite itself with a religious power inspired by Satan. In an effort



to control the world, they will attempt to force every human being into a false system of worship.

Not everyone will bow down to this deceptive power, however. God will have a people who will refuse to give their allegiance to it, separating the world into those who



are obedient to the Lord and those who follow Satan. At this time, God's people will experience a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit and will call all people to worship the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Revelation 14:6, 7).

The Bible describes the work of God's people. "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven … and the earth was illuminated with his glory" (Revelation 18:1). This angel represents a people who will boldly call for all humanity to take a stand for the Lord. Revival will move across the world as these people, working under the power of the Holy Spirit, urge ministers and church members alike to stand for the Word of God and earnestly work for the salvation of souls.

Supernatural Signs

"They are spirits of demons, performing signs" (Revelation 16:14).

As the work of the Holy Spirit becomes more pronounced, however, occult manifestations will intensify. Deceptive demons will appear to many, masquerading as loved ones who have passed away or as biblical saints of old. They will speak words of peace and hope, all while presenting distorted doctrines that lead to sin. These supernatural displays hold great influence with people, and few are willing to speak against them.

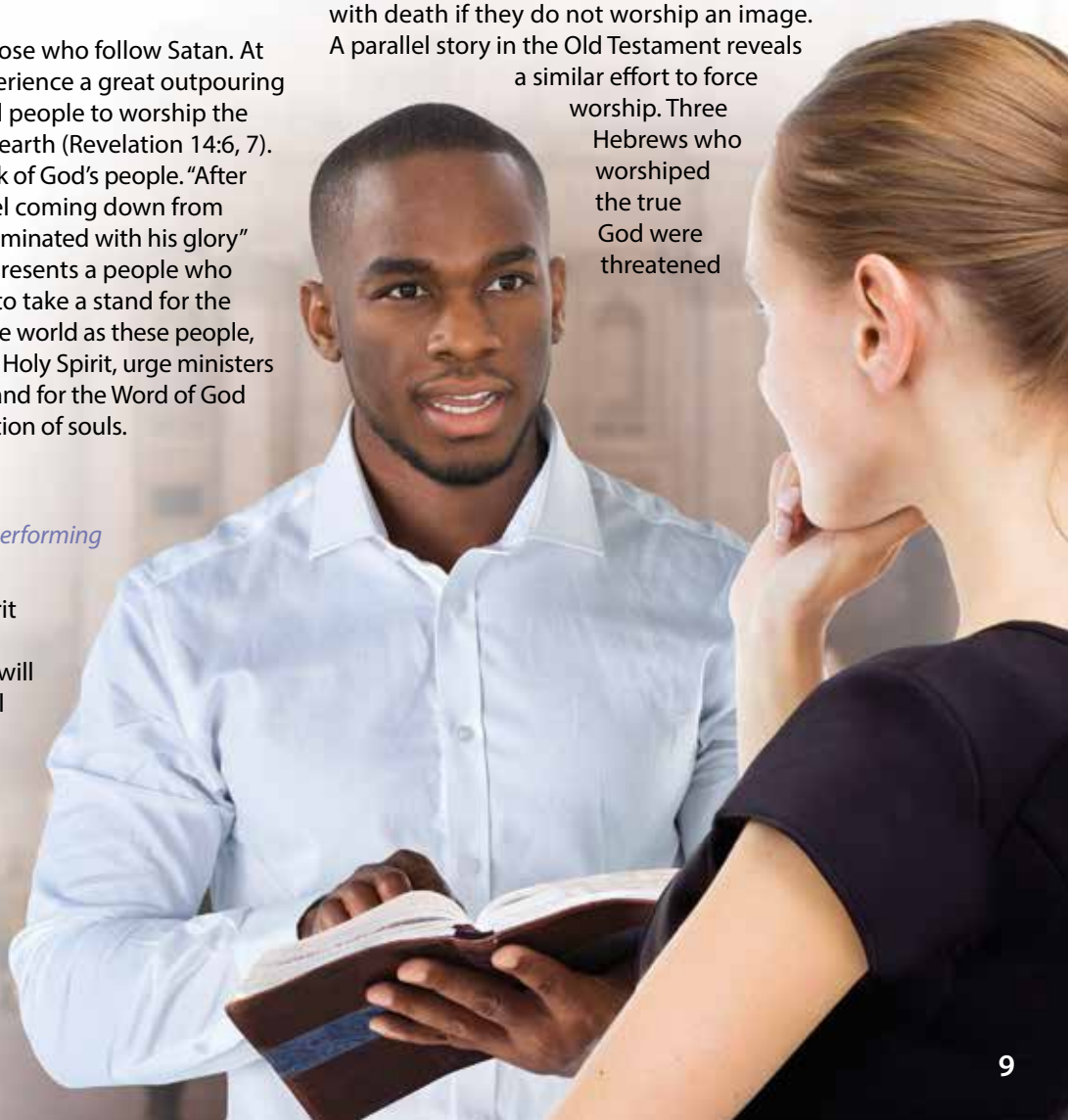
"False christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand" (Matthew 24:24, 25). All through history, many have claimed to be Christ or some other heavenly messenger, and many have believed them. Such frauds will appear up to the very end—before the true Christ comes again.

Jesus warned that these deceptions will be so powerful that even the elect could almost be fooled. Notice He added: "I have told you before." Christ wants you to know about these shams in advance so that you don't fall victim to them. You will not be tricked if you adhere to the truths given in the Word of God.

Forced Worship

"He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

In the end, an earthly government will threaten people with death if they do not worship an image. A parallel story in the Old Testament reveals a similar effort to force worship. Three Hebrews who worshiped the true God were threatened





READY OR NOT

Jesus predicted that the last days would be like another cataclysmic time in world history. Christ said, "As the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37). In Noah's day, the world was polarized into two groups—those who followed God and those who lived for the pleasures of this world.

Though Noah preached of the coming destruction of the world for 120 years, most everyone continued "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (vv. 38, 39).

Likewise, only two groups will exist on the earth just before Jesus returns: those who are ready for His coming and those who are not. "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (v. 44).

with execution if they did not bow down to the idol of a Babylonian king.

> *"If you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Daniel 3:15).*

These Hebrew men refused to violate one of the Ten Commandments—"You shall not make for yourself a carved image … you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Exodus 20:4, 5)—and they faced death. God miraculously saved them, however, even though they were ready to die rather than disobey Him. (See Daniel 3.)

The same will happen in the last days. Laws will be passed that will pressure people, on the penalty of death, to "worship the image." Satan wants to turn everyone away from worshiping the Creator and Redeemer of humanity. These laws will appear to promote moral living, but in reality, they prepare the world to embrace the mark of the beast and the antichrist (Revelation 13:14–17). Such laws will be known by people to directly contradict God's law.

A time of trouble is coming that will be worse than anything the world has ever seen, and we've already seen some pretty horrible times. As this world crisis mounts, with people desperately seeking for relief and nations looking for stability, "help" will appear in a most startling form.

A Warning

> *"Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).*

Imagine a radiant, charismatic being appearing on the earth and claiming to be the Son of God. An army of news agencies flocks to see this supernatural entity perform miracles and hear him repeat many of the same words Jesus spoke. This event is beamed to the world via satellite, and millions believe that his appearance on television has fulfilled the prophecy that "every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7).



This powerful ruse awaits those who are not prepared, who have not fortified their minds with the truths of God's Word. When all the world declares that this being is the Savior, God's faithful people will say, "No!"

The world is facing tremendous challenges. But the good news is that God will never forsake His people. Jesus promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20 KJV).

As storms like Hurricane Harvey prove, there is no guarantee of safety this world can offer. Shattering catastrophes will only increase as the end draws near. Your safety can be found only in the Lord and His promises. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, 'He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust' " (Psalm 91:1, 2). Will you make the Lord your refuge right now?

EVENT

3



Probation Closes

When Elias Unger jumped out of bed on the morning of May 31, 1889, he had reason to be anxious. After record-breaking rainfall in Pennsylvania, the South Fork Dam near his home was swollen and ready to crest.

Unger quickly gathered a group of men to unclog a spillway to relieve the tremendous pressure on the structure, but their efforts were futile. Under orders from Unger, John Parke, an engineer, sent telegraph warnings to Johnstown, a large town fourteen miles downstream, to explain the unstable nature of the eroding dam.



But the warnings were not passed along to town authorities. Moreover, too many false alarms had been given in the past—so the cautions were ignored. At around 2:50 PM, the dam gave way and 3.8 billion gallons of water rushed down the Conemaugh River, destroying everything in its path.

As the tidal wall of destruction smashed houses, uprooted trees, and carried away people and animals, some in smaller towns were able to escape to higher ground. An hour later, the flood hit Johnstown, catching residents by surprise. A wall of water and debris nearly 60 feet high, traveling at 40 miles per hour, crushed people and carried away houses and businesses.

More than 2,200 people lost their lives—99 entire families perished, including 396 children. One-third of the dead could not be identified and were buried in the "Plot of the Unknown."

Have you ever ignored a warning and almost lost your life? Have you ever made an irreversible decision that you wished you could have undone? In the final events of earth's history, there is a final warning given to everyone in the world—and all will need to make a final decision for or against Christ.

If this warning goes unheeded, there will be no second chance—as many teach.

The Deceiver

"The great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

Jesus said that Satan "was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). And one of Satan's greatest deceptions will occur when he comes and impersonates Christ—and most of the world will think he is the Savior.

Amid all this, however, God will have a faithful people, a remnant, who will not fall for these deceptions—but who will stand up and speak against them. Notice how the Bible describes these people: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

What can we learn from Jesus' example regarding how to be protected from these deceptions? Right after Christ's

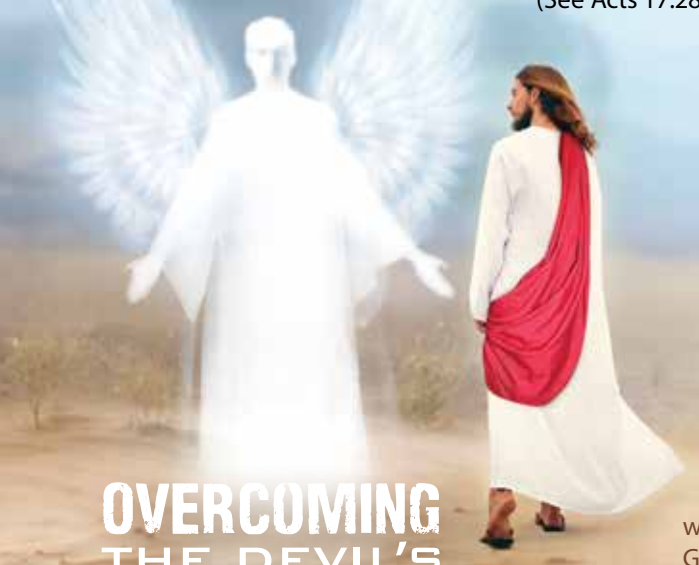
baptism, He went into the wilderness, where, after forty days, He faced the temptations of Satan. During these encounters, Satan appeared to Jesus as an angel of light from heaven and sought to ensnare Him in one of his deceptions.

"The devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me' " (Matthew 4:8, 9).

Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him. The Bible says that in the last days, satanic powers will try to turn people away from the worship of God to the worship of the beast, who "exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:12).

Satan is in the business of trying to recruit people to worship him instead of God. Yet despite Satan's success, God will have a group of faithful people who proclaim the third angel's message: "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

While many in the world are falling for Satan's deceptions and worshiping the beast and his image, others are not. They are worshiping the Creator, the One who made the heavens and the earth, the One who gave us life and breath and who sustains us now. (See Acts 17:28.)



The Plagues Fall

A terrible calamity awaits those who get caught up in the false system of worship that Satan will establish through force and deceit.

"I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, 'Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.' So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image" (Revelation 16:1, 2).

Amid the trials of the last days, the hope that things will get better is crushed as Revelation's seven last plagues begin to fall on the world in rapid succession.



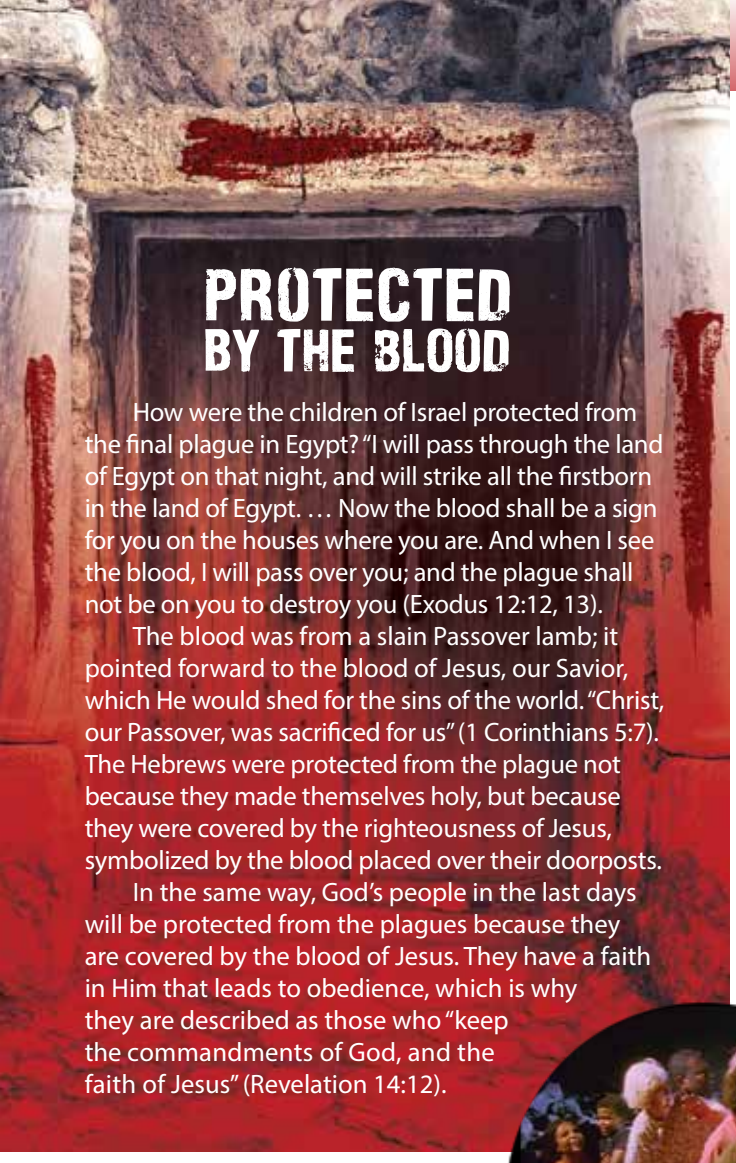
The first plague is a gruesome sore that causes excruciating suffering for the lost. Six more devastating plagues follow. The waters in the seas and rivers turn to blood. The sun is given power to scorch men. As plague after plague falls, terror reigns on the panic-stricken world.

Yet during this time, those who refuse to worship the beast will be protected. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge. ... You shall not be afraid of the terror by night. ... No evil shall befall you, nor

OVERCOMING THE DEVIL'S DECEPTIONS

How did Jesus overcome Satan's deceptions? He said, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve' " (Matthew 4:10).

Jesus knew that the being who came to Him was trying to deceive Him, for if he was truly from God, he would never have asked Jesus to do anything contrary to the Bible. Christ drove Satan away by quoting the Bible. In the last days, a people will also rely on Scripture to identify the deceptions of Satan. God's followers will point others to the truth amid a time of confusion. The world will soon face a terrible crisis regarding true and false worship. Critical events will test your loyalty and faith. How thankful you can be that the Bible has revealed those events in advance.



PROTECTED BY THE BLOOD

How were the children of Israel protected from the final plague in Egypt? "I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. … Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you (Exodus 12:12, 13).

The blood was from a slain Passover lamb; it pointed forward to the blood of Jesus, our Savior, which He would shed for the sins of the world. "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Hebrews were protected from the plague not because they made themselves holy, but because they were covered by the righteousness of Jesus, symbolized by the blood placed over their doorposts.

In the same way, God's people in the last days will be protected from the plagues because they are covered by the blood of Jesus. They have a faith in Him that leads to obedience, which is why they are described as those who "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

shall any plague come near your dwelling" (Psalm 91:4, 5, 10). Although forgotten by humanity, they are not forgotten by God.



A Final Choice

During this time, God makes this pronouncement:

> *"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).*

Soon every choice about whether to be "holy" and "righteous" will be sealed. Like a skydiver who has jumped out of an airplane door—it will be too late to go back.

Noah preached for many years, giving everyone a chance to get on the ark and be saved from the Flood. But once the door to the boat was closed, that was it. Their choices were sealed. Revelation 22:11 teaches the same thing. Some call it the "close of probation"—when each person's choice, either to follow the Lord in faith and obedience or to worship the beast, will be final. Of course, God's will is that we choose to follow Him and not be lost. "The Lord ... is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Yet God never forces the will. He wants us to come to Him of our own free choice.

The Wrath of Satan

When all have made a choice for or against Jesus and the plagues are poured out, Satan will stir up even more hatred against those who refuse to worship him.

> *"The dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).*

Persuaded by the false Christ, the lost believe their only hope for relief from the plagues is to eliminate those who oppose them. Thus, the decision is made to search out and exterminate the people of God. "He [the lamb-like beast]



was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

This is the battle of Armageddon. Popular Christian literature equates Armageddon with a military battle in the Middle East; however, it's much bigger than that. It is a worldwide spiritual battle between the forces of good and evil—a battle in which Satan and his forces make a desperate attempt to exterminate God's people and control the world.

And though things don't look good for the faithful minority, the remnant stand firm for Jesus—and they have nothing to fear, because the Lord will step in and rescue them at the end of time.

How can you prepare to make sure you are on the Lord's side before probation closes and your choices are sealed? Right now is the time to make your decision. Will you place yourself on the side of Christ?

EVENT 4



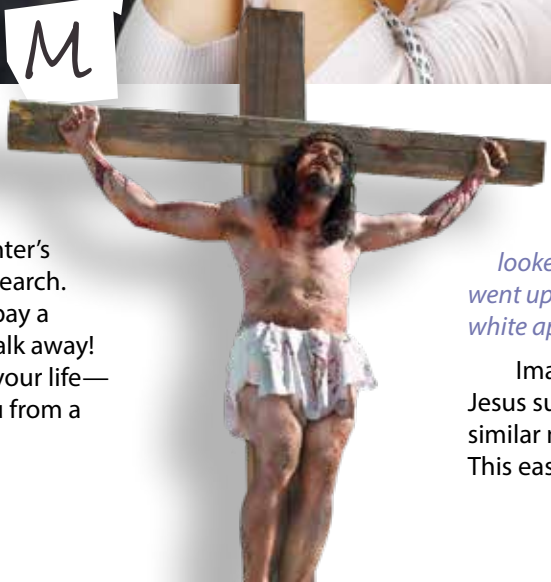
The King Returns

When twenty-year-old college student Barbara Mackle was kidnapped in Georgia in 1968, she thought she might never again see the light of day. Gary Krist and Ruth Schier forced her into a coffin-like box and buried it eighteen inches underground. Leaving her with a small battery-powered light, some food and water, and two plastic pipes for air, they then demanded a ransom of $500,000 from Mackle's father, Robert, a wealthy land developer.

The father gladly pulled together the cash to free his daughter, but the first ransom drop was disrupted by local police. The kidnappers fled. But the second ransom drop was a success. Krist later called the FBI switchboard and gave vague directions to where Barbara was buried. After being underground for 83 hours, Barbara was found by the FBI. She was dehydrated but otherwise unharmed. Her captors were later caught and imprisoned.

Imagine if, after paying the ransom and discovering his daughter's location, the father called off the search. Certainly, no loving father would pay a ransom to free a child and then walk away! Likewise, Jesus paid a ransom for your life—and He is coming back to save you from a vile kidnapper—Satan.





He Will Come Back

"There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5, 6).

According to the Bible (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45), Jesus gave His life to cover the penalty for our sins so that we could be spared from eternal death. At the same time, His sacrifice gives us the assurance that He will return and take back those for whom He paid the ultimate price. Christ's gift for us on the cross at His first coming is a guarantee of His second coming.

Notice what Christ's followers were told by an angel just after Jesus returned to heaven: "This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Jesus is going to come back to them in the same way He left. But how did Christ leave this earth?

"When He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel" (Acts 1:9, 10).

Imagine standing with the disciples when Jesus suddenly rises up into the clouds. In a similar manner, He will return to the earth. This easily understood truth, however, has

been challenged by many popular books and movies through the "secret rapture." This theory teaches that Christ will return quietly and invisibly—that the only sign He has come is the sudden disappearance of people who are transported to heaven, leaving nothing behind but an empty set of clothes.

The Manner of Christ's Return

The way the Bible openly teaches about Jesus' coming does not harmonize with the incorrect teachings of a secret rapture.[1] Notice how Christ spoke of His return:

"The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30, 31).

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7).

"As the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

All these—and many others—don't sound as if they were talking about a quiet, secret event! Rather, these passages present the coming of Jesus as a worldwide event that no one is going to miss!

Today, many different teachings exist about the manner of Christ's coming. Some people say that His return is only spiritual or symbolic; they say that the Second Coming happens when Christian communities live up to a strong commitment to social justice. The Second Coming for them is the same as a successful social cause that brings peace on earth.

Others say that the Second Coming takes place at conversion—it is what happens in your heart when you come to personally know Christ. The Second Coming is





The Second Coming will be ...

- A literal event (Acts 1:9–11)
- A visible event (Revelation 1:7)
- A worldwide event (Matthew 24:26, 27)
- An audible event (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
- A physical event (Revelation 16:18)
- A decisive event (Matthew 24:29–31)
- A glorious event (Matthew 25:31)
- A transforming event (Luke 21:25–28)
- A bright event (2 Thessalonians 2:8)

Descriptors of Christ's Return:

- Lightning (Matthew 24:27)
- Clouds (Matthew 26:64)
- A trumpet (Matthew 24:31)
- A shout (1 Thessalonians 4:16)
- Power (Luke 21:27)
- Glory (Mark 13:26)
- Angels (Matthew 16:27)
- Brightness (2 Thessalonians 2:8)
- Flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1:8)
- Earthquake (Revelation 16:18)

1 For more information on the secret rapture teaching, visit www.rapturetruth.com.

viewed as a personal, internal event—and nothing more. Still others insist that Jesus will come quietly, snatching away His followers, while everyone else is "left behind."

Yet the Bible makes it clear that the return of Christ will be the most spectacular event in all history—seen by all the living. Nothing will ever be the same again.

The Fate of the Wicked

According to the Bible, what happens to the wicked when Jesus returns?

"The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!' " (Revelation 6:15, 16).



While God's faithful people are fleeing from evil people, the Lord returns for them. Suddenly, all those who were in pursuit and seeking the destruction of God's people now find themselves fleeing and hiding from Jesus. The tide is turned in favor of God's people! The ransomed rejoice in being rescued by their Savior.

By contrast, the lost have rejected all the opportunities to receive the gift of salvation from eternal death. They reap the final fruits of their rebellion. They have spurned every chance to repent, to have their sins forgiven, and to enjoy the promise of eternal life.

It is vital for you to make your decision for Christ. Don't delay! Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30). There is no middle ground. We must make a choice for Jesus, or else we are making a choice for the other side—the side of the lost, the side of those who will flee from the Lord when He returns.

We are all helpless to free ourselves from the grip of Satan. But Jesus' came and paid the ransom on our behalf. He did what we could never do for ourselves—to die and rise victoriously. He is now preparing to return and set us free too!

Eternal Morning

What will be the most dramatic event when Christ comes back?

"The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

What an incredible promise! Christ is coming back in the clouds of heaven. It is going to be a worldwide event. Every eye shall see Him. And if that weren't enough, when He comes back, the saved who have died will be raised to life!

Throughout the whole earth, a great multitude of redeemed arise from countless graves. They now appear clothed with youthful, glorified, and immortal bodies; without a trace of disease or deformity. They are finally receiving the glorious promise that was given them through the death and resurrection of Christ. The eternal



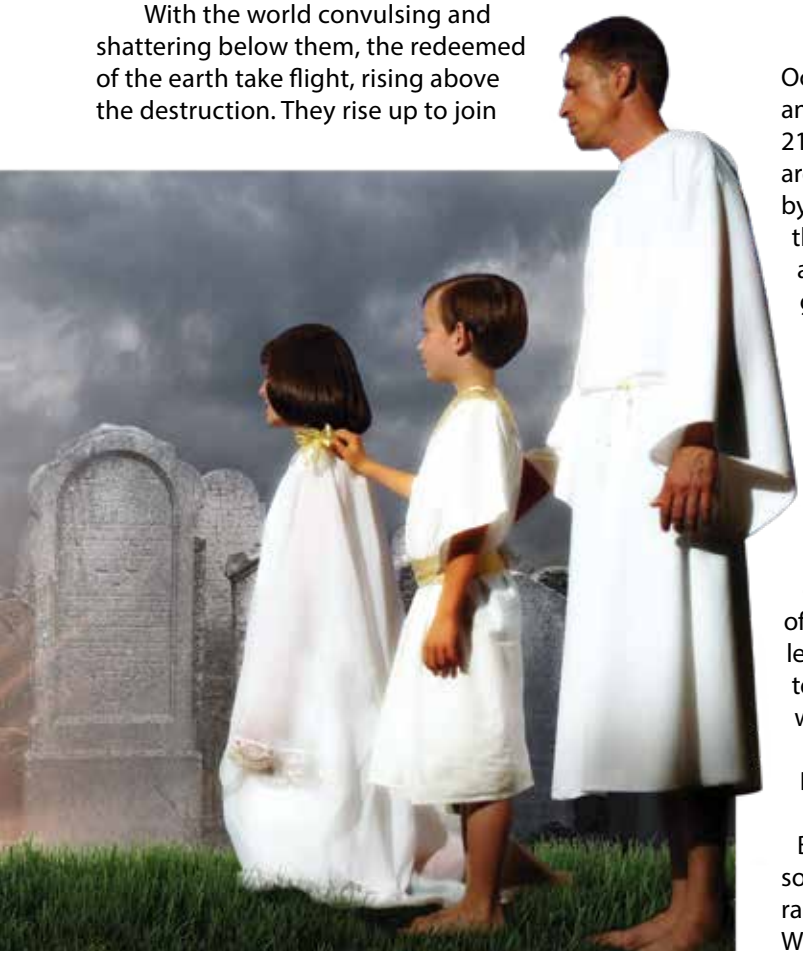


life they have longed for is now given—a life that will never be taken from them!

What will happen to God's people who are alive at the time of the Second Coming?

> *"We who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).*

With the world convulsing and shattering below them, the redeemed of the earth take flight, rising above the destruction. They rise up to join their Savior in the midst of the clouds of angels. The veil separating them from their Lord has forever been removed.



Think about what that means. In an instant, our bodies will be changed. That's what the Bible says: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). We shall be transformed in that we are instantly given new, incorruptible bodies, just like those who were resurrected from the dead!

A Vast Wasteland

The wicked die at the coming of Jesus, while the righteous dead are resurrected to eternal life. Along with God's people who are alive when Christ returns, they both will be given new bodies. Together they rise to meet Jesus and ascend to heaven. But what happens to the earth after these events unfold?

> *"At that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground" (Jeremiah 25:33).*

During the Second Coming, chaos reigns on the planet. Oceans boil, earthquakes shatter the land, islands vanish, and hailstones pummel the earth. (See Revelation 16:17–21.) The wicked who manage to survive these catastrophes are soon destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's presence and the continuing global upheaval. Their bodies lay scattered across the face of the ravaged planet.



For the first time since its creation, the earth is now completely devoid of any living human. Only Satan and his fallen angels are left to behold the results of their rebellion. The earth—once teeming with human life and activity—becomes a vast wasteland, revealing the horrible fruits of sin and rebellion.

Where will you be at the Second Coming of Jesus? Barbara Mackle was kidnapped, placed in a coffin-like box, and then set free after her father paid a ransom. But we have the promise from our Heavenly Father that someday Jesus will come and set us free. We have been ransomed from death and may forever enjoy eternal life. Will you accept Christ's gift today?

5 Millennium



It all began innocently. Reza was a sixteen-year-old living in a small town in Iran. He loved reading, and one day at school, he decided to create a magazine to show people back in Tehran, where he used to live, what life was like in his new home. After interviewing a street vendor who spoke honestly about the social injustice in their country, he created his first copy of *Parvaz* ("to soar").

Soon after printing fifty copies on the school's copy machine and distributing them, three government officials visited his high school, came into his class, and said to Reza, "Could you come with us?" He had no idea they were the secret police. They escorted him out of the classroom to their car, drove him to a nondescript building in town, and there they questioned him about his magazine.

Reza was proud of his work and didn't hesitate to explain what he was doing. In a moment, the lead interrogator's face grew dark. He began yelling, "Who gave you permission to do this? You're not allowed to in our country! You're causing trouble!" He then beat Reza with the magazines and said, "You must never touch this again!"



It was a turning point for Reza who, at the time, had no idea that there was no free speech in Iran. He then formed his entire career as a world-renowned photographer and journalist, speaking up for justice and freedom.

In many countries of the world, the inalienable right of freedom of speech has been removed; the public fears censorship and punishment. But what about the government of heaven? You might be surprised at how important justice is to God. Indeed, the Bible teaches that after the Second Coming, a thousand years is dedicated to ensuring that everyone is fairly judged.



The Foundation of Heaven

What does the Bible say about the justice of God?

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face" (Psalm 89:14).

" 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth' " (Jeremiah 23:5).

All through the Bible you will find references to God's justice. One of the great attributes of God is His fairness toward all. In a world with so little honesty and equality, God assures us that truth and righteousness will ultimately prevail.

Ultimate justice will be brought to our world, for the Bible says, "He shall judge the world in righteousness, and He shall administer judgment for the peoples in uprightness" (Psalm 9:8). Furthermore, the Scriptures explain that God "is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth" (Psalm 96:13).

The Bible clearly teaches that God is just and that He will judge the earth with fairness and righteousness. The Lord does not use secret police to suppress those who turn against Him. The Lord is not a dictator who angrily crushes threats, but is open and merciful and will someday bring true justice to all.



Justice Promised

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19).

There are few things in this life over which we can have assurance, but one thing we can count on, according to the Bible, is that justice will be carried out. The Scriptures provide us with knowledge about how fairness will be ensured during the final events of Earth's history.

We learned in the previous lesson that the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ's coming. But what then? What happens on the earth?

"I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of … Satan, and bound him for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1, 2).

Surrounded by the devastation their schemes have wrought on Earth, Satan and his angels will be bound here for a thousand years. Imprisoned on this dark, desolate, and abysmal planet, Satan must simply wait and ponder his future punishment. On every side, he beholds mangled cities, scorched forests, and dry bones—all the terrible results of his war against heaven. Bound, as it were, in one vast, dark bottomless pit with no one to tempt or manipulate, he is miserable.

This time period, when Satan is held to the earth, is what many Christians call "the millennium." However, this word—a composite of the Latin words mille (thousand) and annum (years)—is not found in the Bible. There are various ideas about the millennium among Christians. Some even believe it has already started! Others say that Jesus will come and rule the world for a peaceful period of a thousand years.

But what does the Bible teach about the millennium?

One Thousand Years

What happens to God's people when Jesus returns?

"The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30, 31).

The first thing that happens at the start of the millennium is that all God's people are gathered up. The "four winds" symbolize the four directions, and "heaven" here simply means the sky; thus, all of God's people around the world are gathered together with Jesus. What else happens?

"We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with



them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15–17).

Not only are the living "elect" gathered together when Christ returns, but the faithful dead are raised and, together with those who are alive, are taken up into the air to meet the Lord! All of God's redeemed are swept up at the start of the millennium! But where do the righteous go? Jesus told us:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1–3).

The great hope of the Second Coming is that we are going to be taken off this sin-sick, devastated planet and brought to heaven with Jesus. Do you long to be among them?

A Desolate Earth

What is the state of the earth after the righteous are taken to heaven and the last humans on earth are dead? The prophet Jeremiah foresaw this time.

"Behold, disaster shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the farthest parts of the earth. And at that day the slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become refuse on the ground" (Jeremiah 25:32, 33).

"I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, and indeed there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens had fled" (Jeremiah 4:23–25).

The earth will not be a habitable place during the millennium. It will be a desolate, barren place. According to the Bible, life for humans on earth immediately after the Second Coming and during the thousand years will be impossible.

Instead, Satan will be bound on this earth for a thousand years while God's people will be in heaven. The wicked will be dead, and the devil and his demons will be confined to the earth, unable to tempt anyone to sin. The Bible describes Satan's captivity on earth as a "bottomless pit" (Revelation 20:1, 3).

WHAT IS THE "BOTTOMLESS PIT"?

From the Greek *abussos,* a bottomless pit is a dark, desolate region and a state of chaos. The Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint or LXX) uses this same word found in Revelation 20 to describe the condition of the world before creation, when it was "without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:2). Jeremiah also used this word to describe the earth during the millennium (Jeremiah 4:23–26). This indicates that the earth will be returned to a state similar to the time before the Lord began creating life on our planet.

The Hidden Revealed

What will God's redeemed do during the one thousand years?

"I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. … And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:6).

The time frame in Revelation 20 that speaks of Satan being bound to the bottomless pit (vv. 1, 2) and the righteous being in heaven (vv. 4, 6) are the same—one thousand years. While Satan is cast to this earth, God's people are with Him and judgment is committed to them.



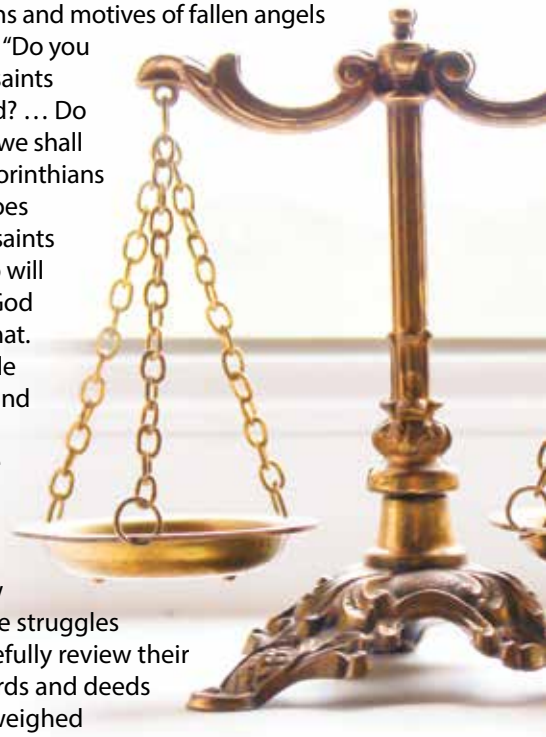
Since the saved are already in heaven, this part of the judgment must focus on the lost. It is a time when God's people can openly ask questions and review records. People will wonder why friends or relatives, who they thought of as good Christians, were not saved. Many will have questions about the worthiness of some who are in heaven.

The Bible teaches us to withhold our judgment in regard to the salvation of others while we are on this earth. But a time will come when we will freely look at the lives of each person. Paul the apostle wrote, "Therefore judge nothing *before the time*, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Corinthians 4:5 KJV, emphasis added).

We will judge others when the millennium begins, when all secret things, including the motives, will be made known. God will allow us to see just how fairly He is going to deal with the lost. We will see for ourselves the hidden thoughts of the unsaved. The veil will be pulled aside revealing spiritual battles that raged for every soul.



Even the actions and motives of fallen angels will be clearly seen. "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? … Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3). This verse does not mean that the saints will determine who will be saved or lost—God has already done that. Instead, we'll be able to know the whys and the why-nots.



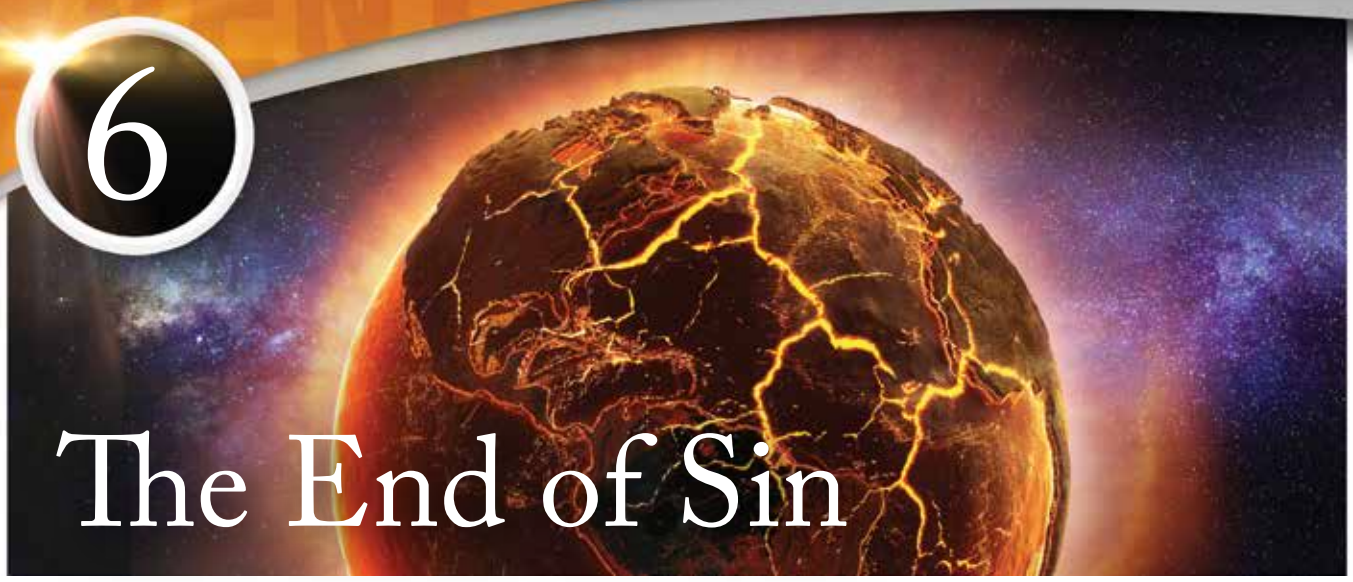
Before a single sinner receives his or her final punishment, humans who know and understand the struggles of life on earth carefully review their records. All the words and deeds of the wicked are weighed against the Word of God. The justice of their sentence of eternal death is affirmed.

Perfect Justice

Finally, at the end of the thousand years, Jesus and the redeemed prepare to return to earth. The time has come for Satan, his angels, and the lost to face the ultimate consequences of their actions. Soon the meek will inherit the earth, but God must first carry out the final phase of His judgment and purge the universe of sin.

God's system of fairness isn't anything like what people have faced under some of the world's horrible despots. It's even better than the free world's system of justice, because even then, mistakes are made. During the millennium, when all things will be fully revealed, the perfect justness of God will be carried out.

6



The End of Sin

The end of the world is just two minutes from midnight.

At least, that's what the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists recently announced in their 2018 report on the threats to humanity's future. The symbolic "Doomsday Clock" represents the likelihood that a human-made global catastrophe will wipe out the planet. The clock began in 1947 as an analogy for the threat of global nuclear war.

Midnight on the clock symbolizes an apocalyptic event that could inflict irrevocable damage to humanity. It first began at seven minutes to midnight and has been moved back and forth 22 times. The shortest time closest to midnight (2 minutes) occurred in 1953 and 2018.



Will our world end in an incinerating bang that will annihilate all life? Will global warming threaten the future of life on our world? Or will the end come from a catastrophic asteroid impact, a pandemic of infectious diseases, giant earthquakes, or an alien invasion?

No. Instead, the Bible has provided us a picture of a destruction that is so intense that it will end all wickedness, sin, and evil. It will involve even fire, but not from a nuclear blast.



New Jerusalem Descends

In the last section, you learned that during the millennium, the earth will be desolate with only Satan and his angels imprisoned here. What happens after the end of the millennium?

"I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2).

The word Jerusalem means "city of peace." Unfortunately, the old Jerusalem has seldom been a peaceful place and has been destroyed many times. This New Jerusalem, however, will last forever. And the good news is that, through Jesus, we all can be citizens in that city!

In Revelation 21:2, John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. After the thousand-year period in heaven, Christ and the redeemed, along with the New Jerusalem,

return to the earth. As the city draws near to the planet, Jesus commands the wicked dead to rise from their graves. As the Bible says, "The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5).

During the one thousand years, the saved were reigning with God in heaven, involved in the work of judgment. "They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). The lost, however—those killed during the turmoil surrounding the last days and the Second Coming, and the lost dead of all ages—all are "asleep" in the ground, dead, until the end of this thousand years.



Then at the command of God, the unsaved from every time and place are resurrected. They are raised up with the same mortal bodies they possessed before their death. As Jesus descends, His feet touch the Mount of Olives. A tremendous earthquake splits the mount and transforms it into a great plain (see Zechariah 14:4). Then the New Jerusalem—the massive city of God—descends from the heavens, and its foundation comes to rest on the plain Jesus prepared for it.

A Second Resurrection

According to the Bible, there are two resurrections, not one. The first already took place at the Second Coming and was for the righteous. But a second resurrection will come at the end of the millennium.

> *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28, 29).*

While the first resurrection—of all those who had died in Christ—occurs at the beginning of the millennium, the resurrection that forms the multitude who come down with Jesus in the New Jerusalem, the second resurrection occurs at the end of the millennium—after the work of judgment has gone on in heaven for a thousand years. This is the resurrection of the lost, of those who have rejected the salvation offered in Christ and now have to face the fruits of their actions.

What a tragedy to end up in the second resurrection, especially when, through Jesus, every one of them could have had eternal life. Christ could have pardoned them through His mercy and grace, but they have spurned His offer to forgive their sins.

Imagine the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven and settling over the place where the old Jerusalem once stood. The new city is much larger and more beautiful, and it is filled with the redeemed. Wouldn't you love to stand inside this city someday?

Satan Released

> *"When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations" (Revelation 20:7, 8).*

When the New Jerusalem descends from heaven, Jesus will raise the wicked from all ages. Satan is then freed to "deceive the nations." What nations could these be other than those comprised of all the lost who ever lived, raised in the second resurrection?

Satan manages to mislead this group one last time, rallying them in an effort to capture the heavenly city by force. Military leaders from all periods of earth's history now apply their combined skills to prepare for what is expected to be an epic battle. By this very act, the unsaved reveal that their hearts are unchanged. If possible, they would tear God from His throne and seize the Holy City by force. They do not realize that their war is lost before it even begins.

Judgment day has come. The time has arrived for those who, regardless of their past, could have been forgiven by Jesus. They now face the penalty of their sins—eternal death.

The Books Opened

> *"I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened … and the dead were judged according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).*

The "dead" in this verse were not only physically dead, but also dead in sin. They are now resurrected and face their judgment. Now comes the fulfillment of all the promises of God's judgment, and it will be fully carried out. The Hitlers and the Stalins, the violent criminals, and all

those who through the ages thought that they could get away with their crimes, finally face justice.

> *"God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14).*

> *"He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31).*

It is important for each of us to acknowledge our sin and seek to be right with God through the work of Jesus on our behalf. God has promised that justice will be done. All the evil deeds in the world that have gone unpunished for so long will, one day, be accounted for. A just God would do nothing less. We must learn to trust Him until that day comes.

A Futile Battle

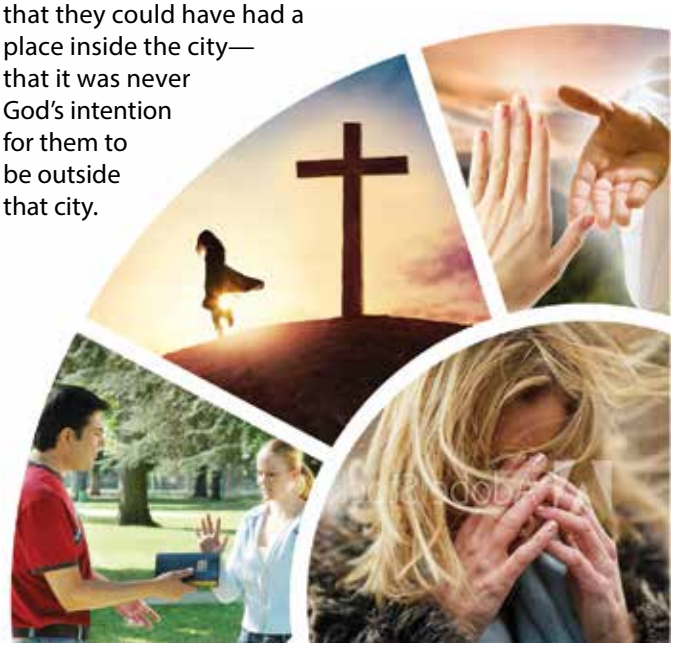
Satan, however, doesn't give up. He even attempts to lead an attack on the New Jerusalem.

> *"When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city" (Revelation 20:7–9).*

All the lost, sadly still in rebellion against God, fall again for Satan's tricks and seek to do battle against the Holy City. Yet the days of Satan and rebellion are about to close forever. They gather as a multitude like the sands of the sea and surround God's city, ready to attack it. (See Ezekiel 38:16.)

Suddenly, high above the city, the Lord appears on His glorious throne. All the feeble war plans of the wicked are immediately arrested; they can only gaze up at the throne of God. The lost immediately become aware of every sin they have ever committed. They recall every time they silenced their conscience, every time they turned from the Holy Spirit's pleading. Some had gone to the grave believing that they had successfully hidden their sins. With shame they experience firsthand the words of Jesus in Luke 12:2. "There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known."

As the records are opened to them, a vivid panorama of their lives plays before them, each lost soul understands completely that, by his or her own choice, they rejected salvation. As they stare upon the beauty of the Holy City, their greatest misery comes from knowing that they could have had a place inside the city—that it was never God's intention for them to be outside that city.



The Bible says that even the rebellious can't deny God's justice. With one voice, they cry out, "Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" (Revelation 15:3). The Bible describes this proclamation: "It is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God' " (Romans 14:11). This is an affirmation of the openness, the fairness, and the goodness of God! Yet in spite of their confession, the wicked make a last desperate attempt to take a city that could have been theirs as a gift of God—instead, they launch an attack on the New Jerusalem.





But it's all done for nothing. God executes righteous judgment on those who refused to accept His offer of salvation.

Eternally Destroyed

"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9).

Finally, the time has come for the lost to face the irreversible consequences of their actions. Suddenly, fire falls from the heavens. As the inferno engulfs the wicked, the righteous remain safe and secure within the massive walls and gates of the New Jerusalem.



All sinners are punished according to what they've done. Those with few sins are destroyed more quickly, while those who are guilty of horrific evil against humanity suffer longer. And Satan, the instigator of all sin, suffers the most. For God, the punishment of the wicked is a painful act, but it is something that justice demands.

There is a great misconception about the fires of hell. A false teaching suggests that God will keep torturing the lost for all eternity, regardless of their sins. But notice that the text says fire from God will come out of heaven and "devour" them. The Greek verb used for devour here means to "eat up," "consume," or "destroy." See how the Bible describes the fate of the wicked.

"Behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. … You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 4:1, 3).

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Those who do not believe on Jesus will "perish"—they are destroyed. Contrary to popular teaching, the wicked are not tortured in hell for trillions of years. The destruction and the results are eternal, but not the process itself. God says that the wicked will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). While the saved are enjoying the blessings of eternity, the lost are no more.

The fire from God once and for all eradicates all sin from the universe. The stroke of midnight for the wicked is not carried out by a human-made nuclear explosion. The world ends through the complete destruction of sin and evil so that the universe can once more exist in peace and harmony.

Which side of the New Jerusalem's wall do you want to be on?

THE DEVIL & HELL

It is a myth that the devil holds a pitchfork and is in charge of hell. Consider these Scriptures:

"He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' " (Matthew 25:41).

"Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are" (Revelation 20:9, 10).

"You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever" (Ezekiel 28:18, 19).

Discover more at **helltruth.com**

EVENT 7



New Earth

There is a deep satisfaction that comes from restoring a classic car back to its former glory. Walk through a vintage auto show and you'll see the pride in owners' eyes as people gawk over their polished beauties. The satisfaction of painstakingly restoring cars back to their prime is worth all the blood, sweat, and tears.

Restoring classic cars also has its share of horror stories. Many dreamers find a "deal" on a dented old junker sitting behind a barn; they picture turning the jalopy into a jewel. But after tearing into their steal-of-a-deal, they discover that bringing a car back to its original condition will empty their savings account. Experienced bodyworkers can separate the dreams from the nightmares. They know that if your rust bucket project has too much rust, you'll end up cutting out and replacing more than you bargained for.

God has taken on a restoration project like no other. Our world is like a wrecked car that has been totaled. But the Creator plans to bring the Earth back to its original state—when He first created Adam and Eve and lovingly placed them in a perfect garden. It took the blood, sweat, and tears of the Son of God—His very life—to take a torn-apart planet and make it brand new.

Seeking to Save All

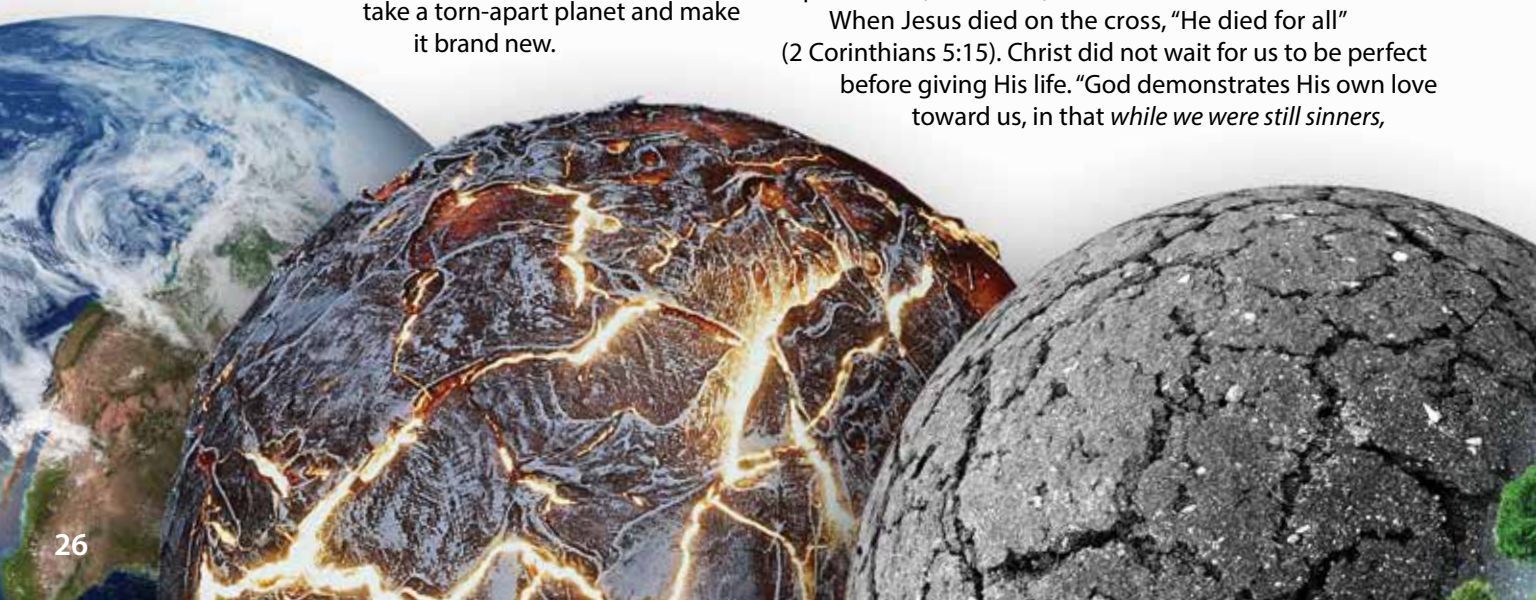
The apostle John saw in vision what will someday happen to our planet.

> *"I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1).*

John was shown a new heaven (meaning the sky or atmosphere) and a new earth. He did not see a world that was patched up and painted over. The old had "passed away." It was gone, never to come back. This will take place at the end of the millennium, after fire comes down from God and cleanses the earth from sin. The wicked are totally destroyed, and nothing will be left but ashes.

The destruction of sinners is described as God's "strange act" (Isaiah 28:21); it was never the Lord's intention that any should perish. Death is the final fruit of the deeds of evil, but God is reluctant to let His rebellious children go. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

When Jesus died on the cross, "He died for all" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Christ did not wait for us to be perfect before giving His life. "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were still sinners,*





Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, emphasis added). Ample provision has been made for everyone to accept God's gift of salvation and live in the earth made new.

Sadly, people reject that generous offer. And God never forces anyone to obey Him. Love is the foundation of His government, and the Lord wants us to serve Him willingly—not by force or through intimidation. Satan uses lies and deception to coerce people to follow him, but not God. It's against His very nature and character.

Complete Destruction

Though the Lord did everything possible to save every human being, some still choose to reject Him. The Bible describes what will happen to the earth and those who are lost:

> *"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. . . . Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10, 12).*

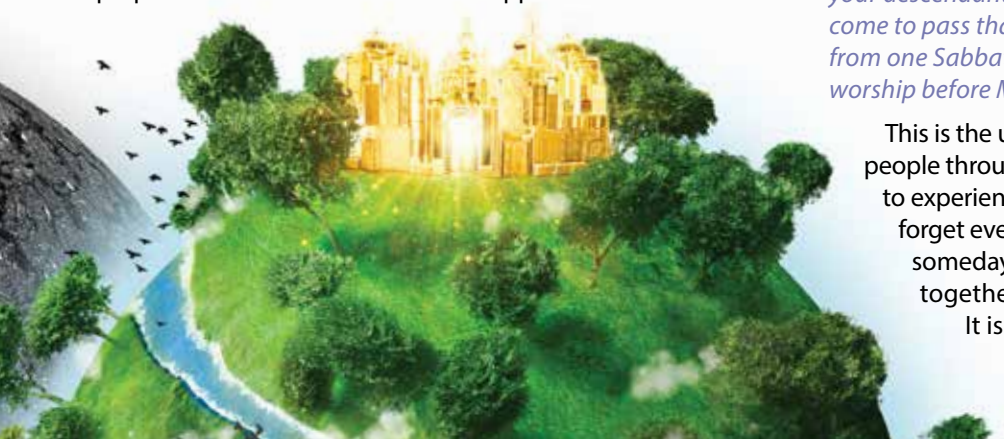
What a powerful picture! It's as if every atomic weapon ever created detonates at once! Only worse. The atmosphere above will ignite; the elements will melt; the earth and the works in it will liquefy with heat. This is the complete destruction of all that came before.

Remember Revelation 20:9? "They [the wicked] went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9). The fire that does this is the same fire that will completely wipe out the old earth. All the works of this sinful world—all the deeds, all the scars, every trace—will be forever gone.

After addressing the great kingdoms of the world, the prophet Daniel describes what will happen at the end of the world. "The iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that *no trace of them was found"* (Daniel 2:35, emphasis added).

Nothing is going to be left of this world of sin, suffering, sadness, death, and pain. Everything terrible will be forever gone. People need hope beyond this world, which will pass away with "no trace" to be found. God provides a plan for you that stretches forward into eternity.

Some scientists speculate that one day our sun will explode and this earth will be destroyed. They maintain that the end of this world means the end of all human life. The Bible teaches the opposite: God will destroy this world, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end—to create a brand-new world out of the ashes of the old one! (See Jeremiah 4:27.)





New Heavens, New Earth

Several passages in the Scriptures point to this new beginning:

> *"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).*

> *"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17).*

> *" 'As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,' says the Lord, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me' " (Isaiah 66:22, 23).*

This is the ultimate hope of all of God's faithful people through the ages—to live in a perfect paradise, to experience a new heaven and a new earth, to forget everything bad from our former life, and to someday join with other believers in coming together to worship the Lord and Creator!

It is hard for our limited minds to grasp

what will be awaiting us. After the earth is purified by fire, the Lord will begin the wondrous work of recreation. By the power of His word, with all the redeemed watching, the earth will be restored to its former beauty. God will speak and a carpet of rich, lush vegetation will cover the planet. At His command, land and water teem with vibrant life. Countless magnificent creatures of every kind will peacefully explore the new paradise. The invigorating atmosphere will be pure and sweet. The earth will become one grand showcase of creative brilliance.

While the Bible promises God's children a home in "heaven" (1 Peter 1:4), it also promises that the meek shall inherit "the earth" (Matthew 5:5). At first this may seem like a contradiction, but it is not. At the end of the millennium, after the cleansing fires have done their work, heaven is actually going to come down to Earth! This planet, recreated to its original beauty, will become God's dwelling place—and the eternal home of the saved (Revelation 21:3, 5).

It's difficult for us to picture a world without sin, suffering, or anything that makes our present life so hard. The apostle Paul was also challenged to imagine a perfect earth. He explained, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

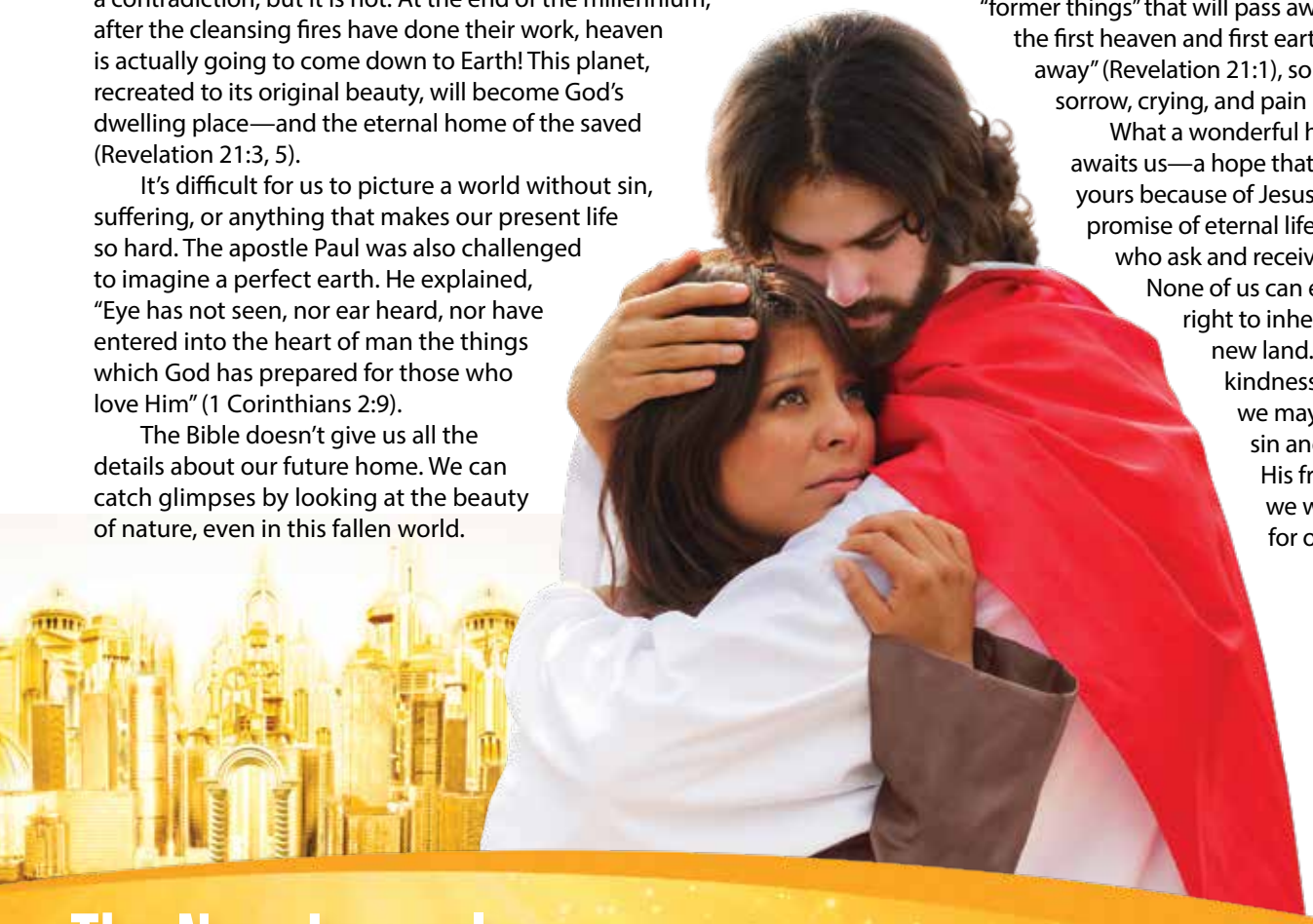
The Bible doesn't give us all the details about our future home. We can catch glimpses by looking at the beauty of nature, even in this fallen world. Though it is ravaged by sin, we still see examples of what the Earth must have been like when it was first created. It causes us to long for that better place.

No More Tears

Not only will the Earth be made new, but our own hearts and experiences will be vastly better. John wrote of that future day in the new earth: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Envision a world without hospitals, funeral homes, jails, broken homes, or fire stations. These are the "former things" that will pass away. Just as the first heaven and first earth "passed away" (Revelation 21:1), so will death, sorrow, crying, and pain pass away.

What a wonderful hope awaits us—a hope that can be yours because of Jesus and His promise of eternal life for those who ask and receive Him. None of us can earn the right to inherit this new land. Yet by the kindness of Jesus, we may turn from sin and receive His free offer if we will claim it for ourselves.



The New Jerusalem

Size: A square, 375 miles along each side; 1,500-mile perimeter (Revelation 21:16)

Walls: Solid jasper, 216 feet high, radiant beyond description (Revelation 21:17, 18)

Gates: 12 gates, three on each side, each made out of a single pearl (Revelation 21:12, 13, 21)

Foundations: 12 foundations, each made of precious stones, giving the appearance of a rainbow (Revelation 21:14–20)

Streets: Pure gold, reflecting heaven's glories as a mirror (Revelation 21:21)

Appearance: Lighted with God's glory, brilliant in purity, beauty compared to "a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2, 11, 16)



One Enduring Reminder

Besides all the breathtaking majesty of the New Jerusalem, there is an even greater focus for the redeemed in the new earth.

> *"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:3).*

The wonders of the new world cannot compare with the joy of being in the presence of Jesus and having the Lord in our midst. Though all evil will be destroyed, there will remain one trace reminder of sin. The Bible gives us a small hint in the Old Testament.

> *"One shall say unto him, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' Then he shall answer, 'Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends' " (Zechariah 13:6 KJV).*

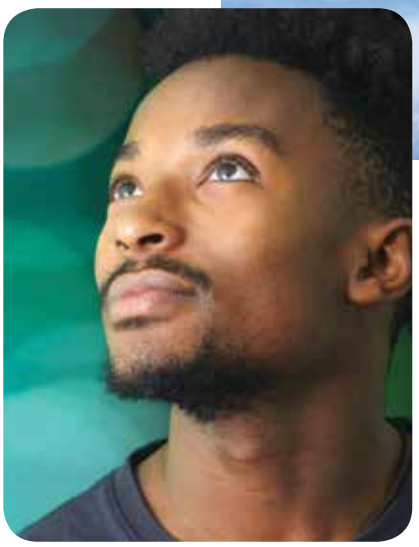
The Redeemer will ever bear the marks of His crucifixion. Traces of the cruel treatment our sins brought upon Him—scars on His head, His side and back, His hands and feet—will forever remind us of His great love in giving up His life so that we could live. These precious marks will tell us for eternity that rebellion will never rise up again.

Two Eternities

The Bible teaches that there are two eternities. One is the eternal destruction of those who turn away from God, called the "second death" (Revelation 20:14). It is a final death brought about as the result of sin. It's a death that will last forever.

The other eternity is the gift of eternal life offered to us by Jesus: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This is a joyful life that will never end. It's a life in a new world without sin, suffering, sickness, pain, or death. God offers to you a complete restoration of your life—not a temporary fix of our broken-down bodies, but a whole new body in a completely remade heaven and earth.

One of these eternities awaits you. Only you can choose which one will be yours. Why risk waiting for another time to make that choice? Why put it off until some other day? Which eternity will you pick? Just pray and ask Him now.



FOUR STEPS TO ETERNITY

1. **Know God Loves You.** The most important step in getting ready for heaven is to realize how much God loves you. "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:3–5).

2. **Acknowledge You Are a Sinner.** Admit that you are lost without Jesus. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

3. **Repent of Your Sins.** To repent means to turn away from sin. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

4. **Accept the Gift of Salvation.** Then believe God has forgiven you. "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Since you now are a child of God, the Lord will begin to work in your life in amazing ways. "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Your Questions Answered



Q Where are we in the timeline of the prophecies of Revelation?

A We are living in the time described in Revelation 13 and 14. These chapters deal with the two great beasts. The first beast—the one that rises from the sea and has seven heads and ten horns—was wounded, but its "deadly wound was healed." This has already passed. The second beast—which has two horns like a lamb and speaks like a dragon (Revelation 13:11)—comes on the scene and is ready to make an image to the first beast that was healed. It tries to force everyone on Earth to worship the first beast.

According to Daniel 7, these beasts are nations. Many Bible students recognize the second beast is the United States, which accurately fits the description and historical setting. It looks like a lamb; it starts out as a nation founded on Christian principles, but it begins to speak like a dragon.

In prophecy, a lamb is a symbol of Christ and a dragon is a symbol of Satan. We are going to see America bringing the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches to apostatize—to abandon their distinctive beliefs and come together to form a one-world church that undermines God's law. However, there will be a people who will remain true to God and refuse to receive the mark of the beast, "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).



Q If Jesus is coming "as a thief in the night," how can anyone know anything about it?

A The apostle Paul says, "Concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you" (1 Thessalonians 5:1). Paul is telling believers in Thessalonica that they know about Jesus' soon coming. They are aware that it will be like a thief in the night, *but not for themselves* (v. 2).

"For when *they* say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon *them*, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And *they* shall not escape" (v. 3, emphasis added). It is not the believer who experiences the coming of Christ as an unexpected robber, but those who live in denial of it. "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (v. 4). Only those who are unprepared experience the Second Coming as a thief.

Many interpret this text to mean that Jesus will come like a silent thief to steal believers out of this world. Then cars will collide, planes will crash, sacked quarterbacks at football games will vanish, and babies will be missing from their cribs. Popular Christian films present this perspective, but it is a distortion of the text. The apostle Peter also wrote: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise" (2 Peter 3:10). According to Peter, this coming of Jesus is definitely not a silent, secret event that precedes a seven-year period of tribulation. Rather, this day arrives suddenly, with "a great noise" and is clearly connected with the end of the world!



Q Doesn't the Bible teach in Luke 17 that there will be a rapture?

A "Secret rapture" advocates often use this text as evidence of a time when Christ will supposedly snatch away His saints from the world. But to get the whole picture, we need to start with verse 26, when Jesus described Noah's day: "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (v. 30). Then He explained that "one shall be taken, and the other shall be left."

For the Jews, to be "taken away" meant they would be carried out of the Promised Land as a form of judgment, such as when Babylon and Assyria carried them away as captives.

In the days of Noah, remember how some were taken and some were left? Those taken away by the flood perished. Jesus said the flood "took them all away; so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:39). Luke 17:37 makes this clear. The disciples wanted to know where these others would be taken. Jesus explained they would be taken away in judgment.

There is no secret rapture being hinted at here. Two people might be outwardly doing the same thing, sleeping in

a bed or working in the field, but God looks upon the heart and some will be lost and some will be saved.

The battle of Armageddon, the seven last plagues, and the great tribulation happen at approximately the same time. According to the prophet Daniel, the great tribulation comes before the saints are caught up to meet the Lord. Jesus said, "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation. … But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24:9, 13).

Just as the children of Israel were in Egypt during the great plagues, God's people at the end will be in the world during the seven last plagues. Yet God will save us through the plagues! First Thessalonians 4:16, 17 explains that the saints are caught up with the Lord in the air and reign with Him in heaven for a thousand years. After that time, the Holy City descends to the earth, then the wicked are raised back to life and the devil marshals them to attack God's city, the New Jerusalem. This is the final battle of Armageddon—a battle between good and evil, between Christ and Satan.



Q Is the "great tribulation" yet to come?

A Yes. It is to take place just before Jesus returns. The "great tribulation" corresponds with the time of the seven last plagues mentioned in Revelation 16. "I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete" (Revelation 15:1). God's wrath will be directed against those who disobey His law, distort His truth, and oppress His people. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Romans 1:18).

The time of trouble may only last a month or two. Scripture indicates it will be a short period of time. Revelation 18:8 says, "Her plagues will come in one day." A "day" in Bible prophecy represents one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6, Numbers 14:34, Luke 13:32). So when Revelation says that "her plagues will come in one day," it means within, or less than, one year's time.

The very nature of the seven last plagues—the rivers and seas turning to blood and the planet being scorched with great heat—would render it impossible for the human race to survive more than a month or two. This is why Jesus said, "Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened" (Matthew 24:22).



Q Does the phrase "the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever" (Revelation 14:10, 11) mean the fires of hell will never go out?

A The word translated as "forever" in the Bible does not always mean "without end." In fact, the Bible uses this term 56 times in connection with things that have already ended. For instance, in Exodus 21:1–6, the Hebrew servant was to serve his master "forever," but it was obviously only as long as he lived. Hannah took her son Samuel to God's house to abide "forever" (1 Samuel 1:22), but she plainly limited that time to "as long as he lives" (verse 28).

The term is clearly defined in Psalm 48:14: "For this is God, our God forever and ever; He will be our guide even to death." The desolation of Edom was to ascend "forever" (Isaiah 34:10), yet we know that it does not still burn but, as the Bible says, lies in "waste."

According to these definitions of the term "forever," the wicked will suffer as long as they continue to live in the fire. Then, as the Bible states, "The wicked … shall be destroyed forever" (Psalm 92:7 KJV). This means that when the work of the fire is completed, it will go out. The Bible says these fires will "burn them up" and will leave them "neither root nor branch" and will leave "ashes under the soles of your feet" (Malachi 4:1–3).

And so the punishment of the wicked will be forever complete. It is not an everlasting state of torment, which would portray God as an evil sadist. Our loving Lord will blot sin out of existence because He knows it would eventually destroy our world and everyone in it.

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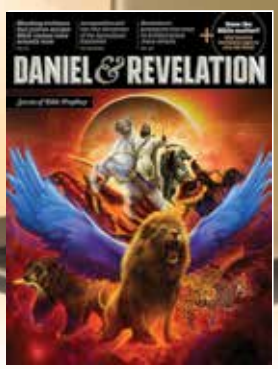


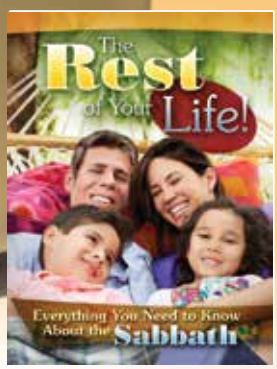
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